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From the Rev.

In the land of saddle bags
The protestant people of Appalachia



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IN THE LAND OF SADDLE-BAGS

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IN THE LAND OF SADDLE-BAGS.

THE PROTESTANT PEOPLE OF APPALACHIAN AMERICA.*

BY REV. WILLIAM GOODELL FROST, PH.D.

President of Berea College, Kentucky.

On a modern map we see a well-defined territory, comprising the western portions of the Atlantic states, northern Georgia and Alabama, and eastern Tennessee and Kentucky, which may be said to constitute one of the natural grand divisions of our continent. This region has great diversity of climate, altitude, and surface, but it has all one striking characteristic—it is a land of saddle-bags. One great limitation confronts its inhabitants—they can travel only on horse-back. It requires more effort for the average American Highlander to reach the capital of his state than for a resident of Chicago to visit London.

It seems like a surprising geological oversight that this territory has no kindly arms of the sea, no inland lakes, and no navigable streams. The lack of waterways renders it more inaccessible than any mountain district in Europe. Bridle-paths following the course of streams, and circuitous wagon roads threading the “gaps” and traversing the larger valleys, form its only avenues of communication with the world.

But this condition of affairs was not so evident to new settlers in America four and five generations ago. To them all “the western country” was a wilderness, and no maps existed which could reveal the difference between western New York, with its lakes and the great coming Erie Canal, and western Virginia. Besides, the first settlers found very good valley land in the Southern mountains—ample domains for the first generation. It was only with the increase of population that it became necessary to cultivate the thinner soil and steeper sides of the “knobs.”

This then is the unwritten history of the first comers. There were the Scotch-Irish, most numerous of all, with their well-known characteristics of temperament and principle. And then came the English

*The record of Protestant emigrations from Europe to America is necessarily obscure and defective. They did not go out with a flourish of trumpets. The Huguenots of France melted from sight, taking with them the brain and nerve of the nation, and were scattered over both hemispheres. Germany had its evictions and shiftings of population. England and Scotland have been continuously drained. But these great movements have been inconspicuous. Secrecy was often necessary to safety, and when the great cause seemed to fail protesting churches and households acted independently and resolutely, and set their faces toward some land of new promise. They disappeared before the face of the oppressor, and fulfilled a Divine purpose in a new and larger world. The Mayflower company is an example, most fortunately put on record, showing the trials and aspirations of the families of a Protestant exodus whose limits no historian has yet defined. It is the purpose of the present article to show how one great stream of this Protestant migration has been lost in the wilderness for thirce forty years.—W. G. F.

dissenters (Cromwell himself once engaged passage to America). The town and family names of the west counties of England which were most concerned in the ill-starred uprising of "the Protestant Duke" Monmouth are to be found to-day in eastern Kentucky and Tennessee. The German contingent was much smaller, and came mainly through the southwest valleys from Pennsylvania. The Huguenot strain made its mark in men like John Sevier in Tennessee.

Many of these adventurous exiles tarried for a generation in the coast colonies, and then "went west" under the same great impulse which affected all Americans after the Revolution. A smaller number seem to have found their way almost at once into the hills.

The influence of slavery showed itself in the first half of this century in driving many of these liberty loving families into the mountains, and in walling them up there with a barrier of social repulsion. The line between mountain and lowland came to represent diversity of type and ideas, animosity even, and so made more effective the isolation of the mountain folk.

OUR CONTEMPORARY ANCESTORS.

And now what has been the unwritten history of the descendants of these Protestant dissenters in the obscurity of their mountain home during the last hundred years? The answer must be that, compared with what has been going on in the great modern world, nothing has happened to these solitary dwellers in the hills. They took into their mountain valleys the civilization of the colonial period—and that is the prevailing type among them still. To understand the mountain people of to-day one needs a little historic imagination. With this he will perceive that most of what a superficial observer would call their faults are really honest survivals from the times of our forefathers. The colonial dialect, with its strong Saxon flavor, and scores of words like *bricketly*, *sorry*, *soon* for early, *pack* for carry, etc., is one of the first discoveries. As we become more intimate with them we find that unlettered dames can repeat long ballads from the old Scotch and English anthologies—ballads which refer to "the Turkish lady" and other subjects of Crusading times, with odd variations to adapt them to their far-off American home!

And the colonial condition of arts and sciences still survives here in large degree. Splint-bottomed chairs, such as went to the attic in western New York fifty years ago, homespun bedcovers which are coveted by fashionable ladies to-day, grease lamps, burning lard with floating wick, hand-mills which turn out a delicious grist for breakfast cornpones, blacksmiths who can also tinker clocks, extract teeth, preach, and "raise a crap"—these are a few of the externals which lead us to characterize the mountaineers as "our contemporary ancestors!"

Passing beyond externals we find a colonial hospitality, a colonial disregard of the sacredness of human life, and a colonial religion of literalism and fatalism. And it is here that we find sad divergence from the Protestant characteristics of the earlier time. Pioneer conditions prevented the maintenance of the educational standard so essential to Protestantism. Preachers were scarce, and they could have meetings but once a month. They had the civilization of the colonial period, but that civilization did not include the common school, the division of labor, or the full idea of toleration. Preachers were scarce and they began to "put up with" men who had little or no education. This was the fatal fall, for Protestantism without intelligence is impossible. No Protestant people has ever been so des-



A MOUNTAIN STILL IN KENTUCKY MAKING APPLE-JACK.

titute of educated leaders. That a man should not know the meaning of Easter, and preach upon the story of Queen Esther on Easter Day, is more amusing than harmful perhaps, but when he begins to boast that he preaches without study, and without "taking thought," so that when he gets up in the pulpit "the devil himself don't know what's-a-going to be said," we cannot smile. It is no wonder that such men neglect "the weightier matters of the law" and give their main efforts to obscure and controverted points. A solemn debate as to whether the "Missionary Baptist" or the "Southern Methodist" is the only true church has occurred within a few miles of Berea. Resolutions denouncing missions as unwarrantable interferences with the "decrees" of Providence, and Sunday-schools as unauthorized by

Scripture, are passed by ministerial conventions every summer. Of course these views are not held by all the numerous denominations in the mountains, but those who do profess a belief in missions and Sunday-schools too often fail to contribute to the one or sustain the other.

And meanwhile the people are without the true incentives of the Gospel. It is pathetic to find an intelligent young teacher complaining that he can not find out what Christianity is, or what the Lord really wants of him, altho he has listened to preaching more or less all his life. And it is still more pathetic to find an aged woman who has brought up a large family of children, faithfully training them in the best of all the traditions with which she is acquainted, and who yet says with a quaver in her voice, "I haint never heard no call of the speerit. I haint nary sign that I'm one of the elect."

The morality of the mountain people, too often quite separable from their religion, is greatly varied, tho on the whole much better than would be expected. Their conventionalities are not the same as those of our towns and cities, but they have moral standards to which they adhere with rigid insistence. In one valley it sometimes happens that the leading families remove, as did the Lincolns, to some western state, and society collapses. The tales of extreme degradation told by travelers may be true, but they need not be accepted as typical.

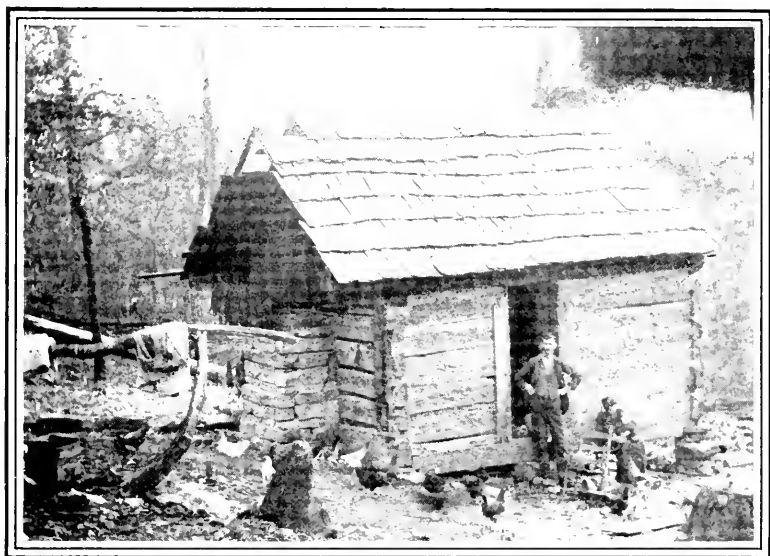
These then are the striking characteristics of this great population: First, the absence of the distinctively modern ideas and habits of thought. Second, a survival of many customs and ideas which belong to past centuries. And third, a certain pathetic shyness mingled with a proud sensitiveness as they realize that somehow they are at a disadvantage in the presence of "strangers," or "furriners," as visitors from the outside world are often called.

THE RECORD OF THE MOUNTAINEERS.

Altho thus isolated from their fellow-countrymen, the mountain people have contributed their share to our national greatness. A number of writers have recently been reseuing from oblivion their Revolutionary record. In the same county where Berea College now stands Daniel Boone was besieged in his fort by a company of Indians under command of a British officer, and summoned to surrender in the name of King George. It was a horde of stalwart hunters from Tennessee, Kentucky, and the Carolina mountains who administered a crushing defeat to the British forces at King's Mountain, and set in motion the current of events which culminated at Yorktown. In the war of 1812, New Orleans was defended by men with long rifles from the hills whose powder horns were filled with stuff of their own manufacture, the saltpeter having come from caves in the mountains.

In the Civil War their services were still more marked. The great

mountain region was not tenanted by slaveholders. Its inhabitants were not the "poor whites" degraded by competition with slave labor, but a self-respecting yeomanry—really the best middle class the South possesses. They owned land and had the independence of spirit which belongs to possessors of the soil. Neither the northern nor the southern leaders seem to have taken account of the mountain element, but they were speedily reminded of it by the action of West Virginia in seceding from secession, and the vigorous opposition of eastern Tennessee simply showed the temper of the whole region. Union soldiers were actually enlisted in the mountains of Alabama and the Carolinas. Kentucky was held in the Union by its mountain counties. And the transfer of 200,000 fighting men



A PRIMITIVE HOME OF A MOUNTAINEER.

from the forces counted upon for the Confederacy, to the Union side, was a mighty make-weight in the scales of civil war. Every movement of the Confederates from the east to the west was hindered by this island of loyal sentiment. The Union soldiers who in other parts of the South were guided by the faithful Negro, and assisted in their escape from southern prisons by his friendly aid, received like services from the mountaineers. Their loyalty is the more to be admired because it was loyalty in the immediate presence of the enemy; a loyalty that cost them dearly in the breaking of cherished associations, the destruction of property, and the sacrifice of many lives. And it is a service to the nation which has never been fitly commemorated nor recorded. The mountain regiments had no badges, poets, or his-

torians. They dispersed to their scattered homes and it is only at the fireside that their deeds of valor find commemoration to-day.

It is to be remarked that for many mountain men the war was an education. They were carried out of the narrow circle of previous experience and brought into contact with men from other sections, and returned to their homes with larger ideas than their fathers or grandfathers had ever had.

That the native vigor and capacity of these people has been obscured but not extinguished is shown by the record of those few individuals who have made their way to the region of larger opportunities. Stonewall Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Admiral Farragut (whose mother's name was McIven), Munsey, the great Methodist orator of Baltimore, Rev. George J. Burchett, of Oregon, Commander Maynard, of Spanish war fame, Parson Brownlow, Col. Robert Clay Crawford ("Osman Pasha") are examples of the sterling abilities of the mountain people.

BEREA AND EDUCATION.

It requires but little reflection to discern the great value of this vigorous, liberty-loving, Protestant population in the heart of the South. It is a population more purely American than can be found in any other section. It has the unjaded nerves which can steady the nation's thought, as well as the giant frames which can accelerate the nation's industries. If it can be touched with education it will be an element which will contribute largely to the success of every good cause.

The present writer was brought in contact with the mountain people by accident in West Virginia in 1884. Some years later he was providentially called to the presidency of Berea College, and he has felt that he was specially commissioned for befriending our countrymen in Appalachian America. The question of the means and methods by which the unfavorable conditions of this vast region shall be overcome, and the native strength and character of the people developed, is an important and perplexing one. It is a piece of educational and Christian work unlike almost any other which can be mentioned.

Berea's program for the mountain population is based upon a few principles which, tho often neglected in such work, seem well nigh self-evident.

In the first place, we are undertaking to reach them as friends rather than as missionaries. Our great analogy is the work which has been done in pioneer communities in the West. While the West was passing through the "stump and log cabin" period, it received substantial assistance from the older and richer portions of the land. The West had a liberal sprinkling of educated leaders, and abundant ties of family and commerce with the East, so that its development was natural and rapid. These educated leaders and these lines of acquaintance with the outside world the mountain region lacks, and

it is our effort to supply them. Everything which promotes acquaintance with that which is best in the national life will help them in the most effective way.

A second principle is that we should seek to develop and encourage all that is best in their present life and surroundings. We should not impose upon them our ways of thinking, in a wholesale manner, but build upon the best elements of their own life and thought. We are encouraging the fireside industries which are so well adapted to their present condition, and trying to make them proud of their best examples of log architecture. The exchange of honest homespun and substantial log houses for flimsy "factory" and wretched board shanties is not always to be commended. We shall not seek to set them in motion toward the great cities, but try to show them how they may enjoy all that is possible of comfort and culture where they are.

This implies a great deal of careful adaptation in all our work. We can not bring them the courses of study or methods of a northern school, but must, at every point, inquire for the standpoint of the learner and the actual circumstances and conditions in which his new knowledge is to be applied.

Another part of our program is to work in an undenominational way. Berea College was led to this position by its providential history, and we have every reason to rejoice in it. Like Hampton, Berea was aided in its early struggles by the American Missionary Association, which was then a nonsectarian society. There has been a growing feeling that the activities of Christian people ought to be carried on more largely in a cooperative manner—that there is a waste of money and of moral power when different religious bodies carry on separate activities, ignoring, and often opposing one another, among a scattered



A MOUNTAIN BOY.

Dressed in a suit of homespun linen.

population. We are seeking to cooperate with all Christian churches and to emphasize the great principles of Christianity on which all followers of our Lord agree.

The fact that Berea was founded with signs and wonders before the war gives it an influence and an opportunity which are altogether unique. It was the outgrowth of the anti-slavery sentiment of the South. Gen. Cassius M. Clay noted the circumstance that the mountain people had land but did not have slaves, and he located a stronghold of free speech among them. Rev. John G. Fee was the prophet of the enterprise, and the men who mobbed and persecuted him so uniformly came to violent deaths that he was regarded with superstitions awe. Prof. J. A. R. Rogers supplied the educational element, and the school speedily acquired a momentum which even civil war could not interrupt.

The college early took the ground that the only test for admission should be one of character, and has for thirty years admitted colored students on the same basis as white students. Last year out of a total of some seven hundred students about one hundred and fifty were colored. This of course implies no social compulsion. No student is forced to associate with any who are distasteful to him. But the institution welcomes all alike. White and colored students do not room together. In the literary societies colored boys are frequently elected to office "on their merits." There has been no tendency toward intermarriage. These arrangements make no more disturbance here than in the great schools outside the territory which was cursed by slavery. And it is a good element in the education of any Southern boy to have him see his colored brothers treated like men. Much to the surprise of many good people this arrangement has never produced a collision or a scandal. And the relations of the two races are more friendly, pure, and satisfactory in the sphere of Berea's influence than anywhere else in the South.



A MOUNTAIN GIRL ARRIVING AT BEREA.
She wears a homespun "linsey" dress and a
"boughten" jacket.

A brief description of our actual arrangements for trying to carry out the principles above outlined may be more interesting and suggestive than a statement of the principles themselves.

Our largest department is the Normal, training teachers for the new and struggling public schools. We have just called to the head of this department Prof. John W. Dinsmore of Nebraska.

Next in importance comes the Industrial Department. We have not had means nor occasion for opening so many forms of industry as at Hampton. Our girls have sewing, cooking, and nursing; our young men have printing, carpentering, and farming. The Department of Agriculture and Forestry is exceedingly practical. The mountain people were the best hunters, and have exterminated the game. Their next resource was lumber, and they have cut deeply into the forests. They must now be taught to get a living out of the land, and to preserve the forests, which ought to be a source of perpetual wealth. Our Prof. S. C. Mason has just returned from a sojourn in Europe, where he has studied the methods of forestry and mountain agriculture, and he will be in position to make suggestions which will enrich every household in Appalachian America.

Besides the departments already named, we have a regular Academy and College course, and the students in these courses are actively engaged in religious work in the college and its vicinity.

BEREA EXTENSION WORK.

Most marked of all adaptations for this peculiar field is the "extension" work, carried on by traveling libraries, horse-back lecturers, and tent meetings, which cover a wide region. Great industrial conferences like those held at Tuskegee are impracticable for the mountain people. We gather five or six thousand of them for one day at commencement time, where we present them with a full program, but we cannot entertain such a congregation over night, nor can they be long absent from their homes. But the extension work reaches them in their homes, and is specially valuable in awakening an interest among those who are not yet sufficiently enlisted to undertake a long journey for the sake of attending any conferences. The extension work brings to them what the social settlement brings in a great city, "not alms, but a friend." A tent meeting will begin with an hour of Bible exposition; after a recess there will be an hour on some phase of education. In the afternoon the first session may be given to a farmers' conference, and a second hour to domestic science. At night the young people will gather for singing-school, which will be followed by a sermon or a stereopticon lecture which will bring the great world into their little valley. We must be careful of each word spoken at all of these extension meetings, for it will be cherished and talked over, and our fellow-laborer who speaks to the same people five years later will have it repeated to him as something important!



A BEREA STUDENT AND HIS MOUNTAIN SCHOOL.

We feel that the work is just in its beginnings, though it has gone far enough to bring us great encouragement. When traversing a new road we are naturally on the watch for the most comfortable house in which to spend the night, and when we find a home distinguished for its good fences, ample porch, and inviting interior, we are very apt to find that the father or mother of the household was a Berea student in former years.

The atmosphere of political conventions and court-house crowds, as well as of teachers' institutes and Sunday-school gatherings, has been improved over a wide area by the influence of Berea students.

No one can ride a hundred miles through this region, up and down the banks of streams, preach to the rosy-checked and stalwart young men and women who gather at "early candle light," and enjoy the hospitality of the great fireside, without realizing that it is an urgent matter that these Protestant people should be made sharers in the better elements of modern Christian civilization. The present writer would not be justified in taking time from his immediate engagements to prepare this article if it were not with the assurance that he should thereby enlist more prayers and support for the enlargement of such a work. In many localities there is an opportunity to exert a molding influence now which cannot be exerted five years hence. Relentless change is knocking at the door of every mountain cabin. The reck-

less vanguard of civilization easily corrupts a people whose morality is not grounded in intelligent religion. It is an urgent necessity that we establish Sunday-schools in advance of the lumber camp and the coal mine. It will make a prodigious difference in 1920 whether Berea had a thousand students in 1900 or only five hundred. If we can quickly gather a large multitude of these young people, though we hold them but a single year, we shall teach them what education means; we shall give them a better idea of religion, and shall send them back with hope and an upward trend in their lives. Twenty years hence their children will begin to come to us and they will come from homes which can give a more intelligent cooperation. After that, progress will roll on with its own momentum. No Christian enterprise can yield more sure and swift returns. If we do as much toward giving them "a start" as we have done for an equal population in the West, the mountain people will help us and our children in every good cause.

EDITORIAL NOTE.

(*Missionary Review of the World*, January, 1901.)

We are glad to present this account of the condition and needs of the mountaineers of the Appalachian Range in America, and the work that Berea College, Kentucky, is endeavoring to do for them. Berea is undertaking large things, and consequently its needs are great. An endowment fund has been started successfully, but the need for money for current expenses is pressing, especially since President Frost is obliged by the exigencies of the work, and by his own health and family duties, to remain at home this winter. On an average, every forty dollars contributed opens the way for the admission of a student at Berea. At present the number of students is beyond the capacity of the building and equipment, and the number of applications far exceed the present possibilities of the college. The plan of furnishing work to students brings a threefold benefit—helping the students in self-support, training them industrially, and adding to the present equipment of the college.

Requests should be made to *Trustees of Berea College*, Berea, Madison County, Kentucky.

Checks should be made payable to *Treasurer of Berea College*, Berea, Madison County, Kentucky.

Inquiries should be sent to *President Wm. Goodell Frost, Ph.D.*, Berea, Madison County, Kentucky.

The Missionary Review of the World is an international and interdenominational monthly magazine which provides trustworthy and fascinating accounts of the opportunities and achievements of Christian missions throughout the world. The REVIEW has staff correspondents in all parts of the missionary world, and is kept in close touch with all forms of Christian activity. The editor-in-chief, Rev. Arthur T. Pierson, D.D., has long been an authority on missions, and his coeditors, Dr. D. L. Leonard and Dr. J. T. Gracey, are also well known through their many addresses and valuable contributions to missionary literature.

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